



News Release
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Kapa Haka Stars join together in revival of 'Haka Theatre'
during Rugby World Cup 2011 celebrations

A new evolution of powerful Māori performance, first developed 100 years ago, has its world premiere as part of the REAL New Zealand Festival during Rugby World Cup 2011. It's called Haka Theatre and it blends several Māori performing arts into a dramatic stage show called **Arohanui – The Greatest Love**.

Close to 100 top kapa haka performers auditioned from all over New Zealand for the 30 roles, and the kapa haka community is being offered first chance to buy tickets, before they go on general sale.

Arohanui – The Greatest Love is proudly presented by Te Matatini Society Inc, host of the biennial National Māori Kapa Haka Championships and the national body for promoting Māori performing arts, as well as Aotearoa Kapa Haka.

A key event of the REAL New Zealand Festival, it's an explosive and moving full-length stage show combining the drama, beauty, uniqueness and energy of several traditional and contemporary Māori performing arts including waiata tangi, haka, choreographed war scenes, theatre, the elegance of the poi, the technicality of Māori games and the natural harmonies of waiata.

Haka Theatre began 100 years ago when Princess Te Puea Herangi created a band to perform and raise funds to build the marae at Turangawaewae, Ngāruawāhia now the heart of Te Kingitanga. Princess Te Puea's group was Te Pou o Maungatawhiri. They all played instruments, sang, did the poi, and haka in shows mainly around the east coast of the North Island. Arohanui is a new generation of this early concept.

Te Matatini Executive Director, Darrin Apanui says they're extremely proud that *Arohanui – The Greatest Love* has been chosen as one of the four key cultural events to represent New Zealand arts and culture to the world in October.

“To be able to carry on this tradition and evolve it to this level of collaboration between so many of our top kapa haka performers from different iwi is incredibly special for Maori Performing arts.”

Arohanui – The Greatest Love came from a concept by Annette Wehi (Te Waka Huia). It has been written by Helen Pearse-Otene and jointly directed by pae pae with Jim Moriarty, Annette Wehi, and Tanemahuta Gray (Maui – One Man Against the Gods).

Te Waka Huia Leader Annette Wehi says she knows this production will strengthen kapa haka.

“Arohanui is an awesome opportunity for Māori as a whole. Not only is it unique to be able to work with all these great kapa haka leaders and experts, but it’s also an opportunity for our next generation. If this show is a hit it could go even further and just the fact it’s happening means it could open endless doors for our tamariki and mokopuna.”

“The whole thing is that it’s based on Tikanga Maori so it’s important that we respect each other and whatever skills we bring to the table and it’s also about kotahitanga – that’s unity and that’s really what we’ve got here.”

The cast come from all over the country and in true Wananga style of training, they mahi together, eat together and sleep together.

“I think that’s why we’re able to do it, because it’s in Wananga mode.”

The show is a dramatic and compelling story of love, revenge and torn loyalties. Twins Kahu and Mira are raised to avenge their father’s death at the hands of mystical people called Patupaiarehe. But when Kahu falls in love with the Patupaiarehe princess he is forced to make the ultimate choice between his family and the love of his life.

Artistic Director Tanemahuta Gray says the energy around the creation of the show has been tremendous.

“Just the process of harnessing all the creative minds has been great. We’re all keen to show this new evolution of Haka Theatre to our own people and to those from around the world. The blending of Kapa Haka performance with waiata, dance and drama is not a totally new concept but it’s one that we feel we have taken to a new level with this show.”

“This is a whole new opportunity for Māori. We’re setting up a pou – a stake in the ground - for other performers to spring off. Imagine what will come from this 5, 10 or 15 years down the track. It’s so exciting to wonder where the next generation of kapa haka performers will take this.”

Jim Moriarty, known to many New Zealanders as an actor and director in film, theatre, television, and radio around New Zealand and the world for over 40 years is one of the directors for ***Arohanui – The Greatest Love***. He says the show is uplifting not only for the audience but also for the performers.

“This is the Haka universe here. The winners are coming together to create a quality show. There’s a parallel with the rugby, but instead of coming to smash each other in the tackle, we’ve come to elevate

each other through collective excellence. These are hugely talented individuals choosing to work in unison. That's what we do."

Arohanui – The Greatest Love is being staged in Wellington and Auckland for REAL New Zealand Festival that's on around the country during Rugby World Cup 2011. Performances begin at The Opera House in Wellington with four performances from October the 6th to the 9th and then a further 8 shows at the Dorothy Winstone Theatre, situated inside Auckland Girls' Grammar, from the 13th to the 21st of October.

Kapa haka supporters are being offered the first chance to buy tickets, before they go on general release. Kapa Haka clubs **and their friends and whanau will just have to quote "Arohanui"** to allow them to buy tickets through **Ticketek**, but this exclusive pre-sale opportunity only lasts until **15 August 2011**.

ENDS

Attached please find a cast list. Photos are available.

To arrange interviews/options to take photographs or film rehearsals please contact:

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